

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

The application has been amended as follows:

In the claims:

Claim 8 lines 36+ "is obtained, and sending the current item to a reject outlet if no match is obtained." has been changed to - - is obtained.- -

In the abstract:

Line 15 "During the preliminary sorting, the impressions of successive packets are associated in memory with corresponding chronological serial numbers. During the second sorting, for one series of impressions of successive packets for which a match has been obtained with impressions recorded in memory a first series of corresponding chronological serial numbers is retrieved (61), for a current packet a chronological serial number estimated from said series of chronological serial number is calculated and a search for a match of the current packet impression based on said estimated chronological serial number is performed (63)." has been deleted.

The following is the final version of the abstract after the amendment.

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- -The invention concerns a method for processing postal packets including managing digital impressions of the postal packets. In a method for processing postal packets, during a preliminary sorting of the packets, a digital image of a packet comprising an address information is formed, a digital impression (V-Id) is derived from said image which constitutes a logical identifier for the packet and the packet impression is recorded in memory corresponding to data indicating the packet address information, and during a second sorting of the packets, a digital image of a current packet is formed again (51) comprising an address information, a digital impression for the current packet is derived (52) from said image and a search is performed among the recorded impressions in the preliminary sorting for a match with the current packet impression.- -

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: the prior art does not anticipate or render obvious the specific method steps claims, specifically the mechanism by which the prediction technique used to limit the exploration space for matching records during the second sorting pass.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

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The following is a complete listing of the claims prior to the Examiner's Amendment contained above.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 28, in which two chronological serial numbers are computed by linear approximation on the basis of two series of successive item fingerprints, and a distance between the two computed chronological serial numbers is measured.
4. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 8, in which the search for a match is performed on the fingerprints recorded in the first sorting pass in an exploration space centered around the fingerprint associated with a computed chronological serial number.
5. (Canceled)
6. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 8, in which the chronological serial number is constituted by the juxtaposition of a sorting center number, of a sorting machine number, of a sorting outlet bin number, and of a chronological index corresponding to chronological order in which the items are loaded into the sorting outlet bins.
7. (Canceled)
8. (Currently Amended) A method of processing postal items, which method comprises the following steps during a first pass for sorting the items:
 - taking a digital picture of a postal item,
 - deriving from said picture a digital fingerprint which is a logic identifier for the item, and storing the fingerprint of the item in a memory in correspondence with data about the item, andthe method comprises the following steps during a second pass for sorting the items:

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taking again a digital picture of a current mail item,

deriving from said image a digital fingerprint for the current item, ~~and~~ searching the fingerprints recorded in the first sorting pass for a match with the fingerprint of the current item in order to retrieve the data about the item by association ~~in order to sort the current item, if no match is found the current item is rejected,~~

sorting a current item by directing it toward a sorting outlet provided with sorting outlet bins if said match is obtained, and

rejecting the current item by sending it to a reject outlet if no match is found, wherein said method further comprises during the first sorting pass:

associating in the memory the fingerprints of the successive items with corresponding chronological serial numbers, chronological order being the order in which the items are loaded into the sorting outlet bins and

during the second sorting pass, the method further comprises :

recording data relative to matching obtained between fingerprints from second sorting pass fingerprints recorded in the memory in the first sorting pass,

retrieving, for a series of successive item fingerprints which number equal to a certain threshold and for which matches have been obtained with fingerprints recorded in the memory in the first sorting pass, a series of chronological serial numbers associated with said matching fingerprints recorded in the memory in the first sorting pass,

computing an estimated chronological serial number for a current item by means of a linear approximation from said series of chronological serial numbers, and

searching for a match with the fingerprint of the current item on the basis of the estimated chronological serial number to limit exploration space for matching fingerprints, and

during the second sorting pass, if no series of successive item fingerprints matching with fingerprints recorded in the memory in the first sorting pass can be obtained for a number of successive item fingerprints equal to said certain threshold, the method comprises :

scanning, in full, fingerprints recorded in the first sorting pass until a match

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is found with the fingerprint of the current item is obtained, and if ~~no match is obtained the current item is sent to a reject outlet~~

sending current item to a reject outlet if no match is obtained.

9. (New) A method according to claim 8, in which a first chronological serial number is computed on the basis of a series of successive item fingerprints for which a number of successive items in second sorting pass equal to said threshold is in the same chronological order as in the first sorting pass, a second chronological serial number is computed by linear approximation on the basis of a series of successive last item fingerprints equal to a certain threshold for which matches have been obtained with fingerprints recorded in the memory in the first sorting pass, and a distance between the first and second computed chronological serial numbers is measured to compute an estimated chronological serial number for a current item.

10. (New) A method according to claim 8, in which said certain threshold is equal to five.

11. (New) A method according to claim 8, in which said certain threshold is 1/20th of the storage capacity of a sorting outlet bin.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Mark Hageman whose telephone number is (571) 272-3027. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 7:30-4:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick Mackey can be reached on (571) 272-6916. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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